

MEPI MEDREGION UPDATE

MEDREGION UPDATE

**WOMEN LEADERS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND
NORTH AFRICA LEARN ABOUT US ELECTIONS**

Forty-four women political leaders from the Middle East and North Africa experienced the historic 2008 U.S. Presidential Elections. Sponsored by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), women participants from the UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Algeria, all of whom are involved in upcoming elections in their home countries, enjoyed attending sessions in Washington on the U.S. Government and political system, elements of democratic societies, and electoral systems in the U.S. and the MENA region.

The participants also learned about campaigning and election procedures, and went through an overview of the Obama – McCain campaigns. During this

11-day program, the women visited congressional offices, the State Department, and a number of politically active non-government organizations. Last but not least, they got to observe the last days of political races and watch the final results of the voting.

These politically active women enthusiastically started their program after they had a meeting with President George Bush, where they engaged in discussions about democracy and U.S. support for women's empowerment, women's initiatives in the region, and the economy. They also met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with whom they had candid discussions

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MEPI GRANTEE JDG: TRAINING JOURNALISTS FOR THE FUTURE

"We need this kind of training and information."

"You have expanded my mind."

"During my three years in this institute, I couldn't like or couldn't be interested in journalism, as much as I like it today, at this hour."

These comments, written by various students at Algiers University, were given to the MEPI-funded Journalism Development Group (JDG) consultants after workshops on journalism technique earlier this year.

"We could not have imagined how open the students are to our workshops," said Don Pine, managing partner of the MEPI-funded project in Algeria. "These comments and many more show how hungry they are to learn journalism practiced at international standards."

JDG has been teaching journalism workshops at Algiers University for three semesters, beginning in the fall of 2007. Currently, at the journalism workshops held every Wednesday, the classrooms are packed with students, eager to hear the veteran journalists talk about techniques, such as: coming up with story ideas, constructing a story, writing a lead that will grab the reader, handling breaking news, writing personality profiles, adding graphics to stories and enhancing interviewing skills.

"They sit in class, rapt, listening to every word," said Annette Fuller, one of the consultants who teaches the classes. "You see light bulbs turning on in their heads all over the place."

The status of journalism in Algeria today is a complicated mix of government influence and societal pressures balanced by some freedom and independence. Most newspapers

depend on government advertising and government printing houses to make a profit. Many journalists simply take governmental press releases and rewrite them, or copy them verbatim. Others attend press conferences scheduled by various ministry officials and simply cover what is said.

Only a handful of newspapers are completely independent of government advertising and are printed on their own presses.

JDG has been in Algeria since 2005, when its program, funded by MEPI, began. Their grant program is intended to reorganize newspapers in Algeria to help them make a profit and internalize international journalism standards. Currently, consultants work in Algiers and Oran, Algeria's second largest city.

The journalism workshops began as an informal project to teach and look for budding journalists for JDG's newspaper clients. The plan was to offer to teach journalism workshops in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, on an informal basis.

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MEPI
SUCCESS
STORY
IN
ALGERIA



WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy comes from the Greek word, "demos," meaning people. In democracies, it is the people who hold sovereign power over legislator and government. Although nuances apply to the world's various democracies, certain principles and practices distinguish democratic government from other forms of government.

- Democracy is government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all citizens, directly or through their freely elected representatives.
- Democracy is a set of principles and practices that protect human freedom; it is the institutionalization of freedom.
- Democracy rests upon the principles of majority rule, coupled with individual and minority rights. All democracies, while respecting the will of the majority, zealously protect the fundamental rights of individuals and minority groups.
- Democracies guard against all-powerful central governments and push government to regional and local levels, understanding that local government must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible.

- Democracies understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under law; and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.

- Democracies conduct regular free and fair elections open to all citizens.

Elections in a democracy cannot be facades that dictators or a single party hide behind, but authentic competitions for the support of the people.

- Citizens in a democracy not only have rights, they have the responsibility to participate in the political system that, in turn, protects their rights and freedoms.

- Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise. Democracies recognize that reaching consensus requires compromise and that it may not always be attainable.

(This article is adapted from the U.S. Department of State publication, Principles of Democracy.)

MEPI JOURNALISM TRAINING IN ALGERIA CONTINUED

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The project took off from the first meeting in 2007, and ministry officials, as well as the chairman of the journalism department, have continued their support of the MEPI-funded workshops.

"We began to see that our workshops were a nice complement to our newspaper work in Algeria," Pine said.

JDG consultants have 25-years-plus experience in journalism in the United States or for U.S. owned news

agencies. Spreading journalism know-how has been very gratifying for them, they said.

"Knowing we are having an influence on Algeria's future journalists is important," Pine said. "This country is on the verge of becoming a major player in the global society and journalists need to be trained to accurately record and tell the story of this growth."

- Contributed by Annette Fuller of JDG

TO ALL OF
OUR
READERS:

HAPPY
NEW
YEAR!

BONNE
ANNÉE!

عام سعيد!

FROM THE
MEPI
REGIONAL
TEAM



HASSAN DAIQ: TOMORROW'S LEADERS PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

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Congratulations to **Hassan Daiq**, a Tomorrow's Leaders student from Palestine, who won a seat on the AUB Student Council representing the freshman class at the students' elections that took place at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

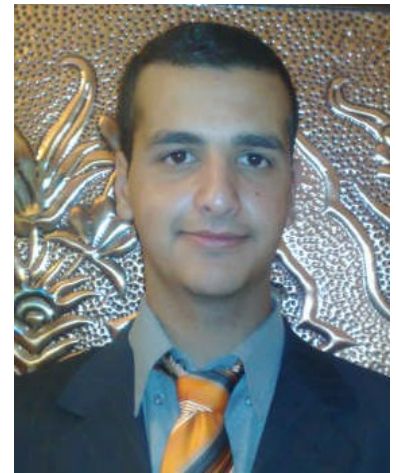
The Tomorrow's Leaders Scholarship Program, funded by the US State Departments' Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), is a new MEPI initiative for capable and highly-motivated high school graduates. The award provides a four-year scholarship and internship opportunities at select institutions of higher learning in the Middle East for individuals who have the potential to become leaders.

The primary objective of MEPI's Tomorrow's Leaders scholarship program is to build, from among Arab students of underserved backgrounds, a cadre of university-age leaders who are civic-minded, intellectually able, and professionally skilled.

The program intends to build leadership skills and the spirit of civic engagement among outstanding students at American University in Cairo, AUB, and the Lebanese American University.

AUB Lecturer Randa Antoun, the program coordinator, said: 'We encourage the principles and values that are sought by MEPI and we educate our students by helping them develop well-rounded personalities.'

Hassan himself notes that 'it is just my first step in the future's road, and all the thanks comes back to MEPI which gave me this opportunity to become who I always wanted to be.' He encourages all students who have a strong personality, self-confidence, leadership spirit and the belief that they can make a change to apply for the MEPI program, where they can improve their skills and make their dreams come true.



AUB's Hassan Daiq, of the MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders Program.

SUBMIT YOUR GRANT APPLICATIONS NOW!

Funding is available now for Local Grants. Please contact your country's US Embassy MEPI Committee and see the guidebook available on our [website](#) for step-by-step instructions in English, Arabic, or French!

Become a partner for reform.

WOMEN LEADERS PROGRAM CONTINUED

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on democracy and reform efforts in the Middle East and North Africa.

During their scheduled visit to Portland, Maine, they discussed women's political involvement in their respective countries, and their future plans to encourage women's participation in the public sector. Samar Fatany, a Saudi participant, submitted two articles to the Saudi Arab News, narrating encounters of her personally

enriching trip as a participant of the MEPI-sponsored U.S. Election Exchange program.

She said: "I was particularly impressed and inspired by the campaign strategies of women running for office. The percentage of women who are represented in government in Minnesota is larger than in other states. Women have been able to enter politics more easily because of support from other women and because of the strong civic sense that is prevalent among the people here."

